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ABSTRACT

An articulation agreement is described that was developed between Florida's statewide community college system and statewide university system. The 1971 articulation agreement was a compromise between the two college systems. Listed are the specific transfer policy provisions of the articulation agreement and functions assigned to the Florida Articulation Coordinating Committee. The committee has periodically established special task forces to create a process of consultation to develop articulation policies or solve problems. Functions of task forces that have been formed are outlined. A common course numbering system, a scheme or logic for colleges and universities to use in numbering and designating their courses, has been one of the most significant steps in the ongoing development of articulation in higher education in Florida. Both universities and community colleges have appointed liaison officers to assist in the transfer of students. New thrusts in articulation include: the promotion of time-variable, competency-based academic programs, especially in Associate of Science programs; the growth in the number of Associate of Science degree graduates successfully transferring to university-level programs; the statewide mandate to implement time-shortened and time-variable degree programs; increased shared use of facilities between community colleges and universities; and increased international exchange. (SW)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY: PARTNERS IN COOPERATION

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BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES IN FLORIDA

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BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN FLORIDA

By Paul C. Parker and James F. Gollattscheck

American higher education has increasingly benefited from the unique partnership between its two-year community and junior colleges and its four-year colleges and universities. It has been a partnership that has brought higher education within the reach of millions of Americans and has directly affected the quality of life for individuals and communities throughout the nation. As would have been expected, however, relationships between these partners have not always been smooth. Rapid growth in both systems within the past two decades and the more recent explosion of new ideas and approaches to higher education at both levels have created many problems and brought the need for continuous dialogue and articulation into sharp focus.

The explosion of college age population in the '50s and '60s precipitated a building and development in American higher education unparalleled in history. State after state found it necessary to create new college and university systems to meet the needs. The community college movement, already under way at the beginning of the '50s, became one of the most effective ways of meeting burgeoning higher educational needs. By the early 1970s every state in the nation had created public community colleges and the 390 such colleges serving 551,760 students in 1959 had increased to 1,235 colleges serving 4,309,984 students by 1977. Unfortunately, it was also a period in which it was frequently more important to build new colleges to meet ever increasing demands than to solve the problems beginning to develop in and between existing institutions and systems. With the

majority of community college students enrolled in transfer programs, it was a foregone conclusion that problems relating to the transfer of community college students to senior colleges and universities would become one of the major problems in higher education.

By the beginning of the '70s the rate of growth had subsided and American higher education appeared to have an opportunity to catch up on its intra-family communication problems. Any hope, however, that the problems of articulation between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities would be solved were quickly erased by the stresses and strains of innovative programs at both levels. The effect on articulation of such emerging trends as time-shortened and time-variable degree programs, competency-based academic programs, the increasing number of occupational and career programs at the community colleges and the development of compatible four-year programs at the upper-division colleges, and the problems of international and intercultural education have created new tensions between community colleges and university systems.

As one of the pioneers in the development of a statewide community college system, Florida early felt the need for a statewide solution to the growing frustration of community college transfers and began work in the late 1950s to develop workable solutions. The writers of this paper wish to describe how one state, with a statewide community college system and a statewide university system, has developed not only an articulation agreement which appears to have solved many of the long-standing transfer problems but also a mechanism for continuing to develop new avenues of articulation to meet new problems.

Early Development of Transfer Agreements

Although one public junior college was established in Florida in 1927, the present statewide network of community colleges did not take shape until after the 1957 legislature adopted the community college commission's master plan. This plan called for the development of a sufficient number of community or junior colleges to place one within commuting distance for every citizen in the state. In the years following 1957, the growth of the community colleges and state university enrollment in Florida was explosive. In 1959 there were seven community colleges with 5,000 students and three public universities with a total enrollment of approximately 30,000 students. In the fall of 1977, 28 community colleges enrolled 183,215 students while nine state universities served 118,186 students. Since 1973, two out of every three students who received baccalaureate degrees from Florida state universities have attended one of the Florida community colleges. Further complicating articulation was the fact that while the public universities emerged as a true system of universities under a single governing board, the Florida Board of Regents, the community colleges developed a system of semi-autonomous institutions, with local governing boards.

Florida was the first state to develop and implement a statewide transfer formula for general education requirements. In 1959 an agreement between community colleges and universities defined the programs of general education to be included in transfer degrees at community colleges and prevented universities from requiring additional lower-division general education courses. Although this plan acknowledged and solved many of the persistent articulation problems, the rapidly expanding numbers of institutions and students created

many misunderstandings and transfer difficulties. Transferring community college students frequently complained that their credits earned in the community colleges were not being accepted by the universities or were being accepted by some public universities but not by others. Universities complained that great variations in community college programs made careful scrutiny of the record of each transferring student necessary. While very effective work toward articulation had been done in 1959, in the late '60s confusion was still evident on all sides. As a result of the continued misunderstanding surrounding the transfer of students from Florida community colleges to state universities, new efforts were begun in 1967 to develop a more specific and unifying articulation agreement.

The 1971 Articulation Agreement

The efforts to develop improved articulation culminated in April, 1971, when the State Board of Education approved a new, more comprehensive Articulation Agreement. The 1971 Articulation Agreement was a highly significant landmark in the development of articulation between the two systems. It proved that a compromise could be reached in order to make it possible for students to move more smoothly through the two systems with a minimum of wasted time, money, and effort.

The specific transfer policy provisions of the Articulation Agreement are as follows:

1. The General Education Agreement of 1959 was reaffirmed giving community colleges freedom to develop individual programs of general education within general limits.
2. The Associate of Arts degree was defined as the transfer

degree. Except for the requirement of a specified number of academic and general education hours, the community colleges retained freedom to develop degree programs appropriate to their institutional objectives. Of great importance to community colleges was the establishment of the integrity of the AA degree. No longer could individual registrars at universities question the components of a degree awarded by a community college with a result of loss of credits to students.

3. A forgiveness policy was spelled out, allowing a student to repeat courses with only the final grade counted in his grade point average. This helped the community colleges fulfill their rehabilitation role and provide students a second chance without penalty.
4. The universities were required to accept "D" grades in transfers. The community college students were thereby placed on an equal footing with native lower-division State University System students in gaining admission to upper-division programs.
5. The universities were required to clearly state prerequisite courses for upper-division programs and to identify those programs with limited enrollments.
6. The two systems were required to develop a common transcript.
7. An Articulation Coordinating Committee was established.

Articulation Coordinating Committee

While the new Agreement clarified and settled many issues which

had created conflicts between the two systems, of perhaps even greater significance was the mechanism it created by which future issues could be resolved and continuous articulation made routine. Dr. Lee G. Henderson, Director of the Florida Division of Community Colleges, recently stated:

The strength of the Florida articulation agreement lies not so much in the wording of the agreement itself, but in the fact that it provides a vehicle--The Articulation Coordinating Committee--for the continuous evaluation, review, and updating of the agreement; and provides a climate which reinforces a concern for the individual student who transfers from one institution to another, and which provides for the discussion and resolution of articulation problems within the context of a full partnership of community colleges and universities.

The nature and authority of the Articulation Coordinating Committee established under the 1971 Articulation Agreement was new and unique to higher education in the nation. In 1974, the Agreement was formally put into the Rules of the State Board of Education, making it legally binding on the two systems. No other state had formed such a Committee with its precise powers, scope, and responsibilities. The functions assigned to the Florida Articulation Coordinating Committee by the State Board of Education are as follows:

1. To interpret the provisions of the Articulation Agreement when questions arise much in the same manner as the Supreme Court does the Constitution
2. To adjudicate and mediate conflicts between institutions in the two systems and between individual students and institutions when such conflicts are related to the transfer process
3. To develop and recommend to the two systems and the Board of Education new or additional articulation policies, thus providing a new vehicle whereby the Articulation

Agreement can be amended to meet changing needs and conditions

4. To promote communication, articulation, and cooperation through the appointment of special task forces to work out solutions to problems as they arise

The Articulation Coordinating Committee is composed of three representatives from the university system and three from the community colleges. The Deputy Commissioner of Education serves as a seventh member and chairman. The Committee meets bimonthly. That the original agreement with its subsequent interpretations and amendments is working well is attested to by the fact that only five appeals have been made to the committee by individuals or institutions since November 1971 and none have been requested since 1975.

In order to create a process of consultation to develop articulation policies or solve problems, the Articulation Coordinating Committee has periodically established special task forces, some of which have become standing committees. The first task force appointed in October, 1971, was charged with the responsibility to recommend policies to govern the transfer of College Level Examination Program (CLEP) scores. Because institutions were using widely different cutoff scores for awarding CLEP credit, it was believed by the Articulation Committee that standardization was necessary or the Agreement would be seriously undermined. After months of study and deliberation the task force recommended a detailed set of uniform standards for the awarding of CLEP credit on the Associate of Arts degree program, which not only guaranteed students credit in transfer to the universities, but assured that the Associate of Arts degree could not be challenged by the universities if it had CLEP credit as a part of it. The use

of a fiftieth percentile cutoff for CLEP credit was adopted subsequently by the Committee and the two systems resulting, finally, in an amendment to the Agreement. No more controversial an issue has been faced by the Committee than that of the use of CLEP credit. Not only did the Amendment settle a difficult problem, but it clearly illustrated that the Committee could be a highly effective device for arbitrating conflict and assuring that the Agreement would be a flexible and adaptive document.

Because there are other external credit by examination programs, such as the Advanced Placement Program (APP) and the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI), the aforementioned task force was established as the Standing Committee on Alternative Ways of Earning Credit. Subsequently, it has made recommendations on the transferability of APP and USAFI credit, which have eventually become Amendments to the Agreement and currently have been concerned with the issue of the transferability of cooperative education credits and credits earned by an assessment of experience. The Committee has also made recommendations periodically to revise credit policies as the CLEP program has undergone revisions.

Because the Articulation Agreement called for the creation of a common community college transcript, a task force was appointed to design one in the winter of 1971. University representatives were also appointed to the task force to facilitate its design and to encourage the universities to adopt the transcript as well. The common transcript was adopted by the Articulation Committee in 1972, although it has undergone almost yearly revisions since then. The universities will be using the common form in the fall of 1978. The task force was converted into a standing committee when it became

apparent that the transcript form would need at least annual review to insure that it remains current with developments in grading, reporting, and data processing.

Other task forces have been established to work on a definition of occupational programs, to review the need to revise the Agreement with respect to the prohibition of the transfer of required Physical Education courses as part of the Associate of Arts degree, and to recommend transfer procedures and policies for students in Social Work education programs, Engineering, and Teacher Education. The task forces and standing committees have served to emphasize that articulation policies are best developed through cooperation between the Committee and the institutions and their faculties which must implement them and make them work.

The Articulation Committee cannot establish policies or create Agreement amendments entirely on its own. Not only does the Committee rely upon the task forces and standing committees for policy formulations, but it also sends its recommendations to the two systems for review by appropriate councils of vice presidents, presidents, and in the case of the universities, to its Board of Regents. When the Cabinet Board of Education, the body which governs all of education in Florida, receives recommendations for rule changes in the Articulation Agreement, they have been thoroughly reviewed and tempered by the institutional leadership of the community colleges and universities and by the members of the Articulation Committee. The role of the Articulation Committee, however, in this process is central and of primary influence.

Common Course Numbering System

Although the 1971 Articulation Agreement suggested that the Articulation Coordinating Committee concern itself with the development of a common course numbering system as one of several innovations which would improve articulation, it has not had the responsibility for developing such a system. In the late 1960s, the Florida Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (FACRAO) established a special committee, which, in 1971, proposed to the universities and colleges, public and private, a common scheme or logic for college and universities to use in numbering and designating their courses. At the same time the Division of Community Colleges of the Department of Education began developing a common numbering system for its institutions. During the summer of 1971, it was agreed that the FACRAO and community college plans should be merged and that the system should be created as a joint project under the funding and direction of the Commissioner of Education. A year later in the Fall of 1972, a full-time staff was hired and the project went into operation. The system was put into Legislative Statute in 1975 and became fully operational in 1977. The Articulation Committee has been closely concerned with the progress of the Project and has been called upon to resolve several related issues. Because the system contains data on all the courses offered in the state, it provides useful course and curricular information needed by Articulation Committee task forces established to improve articulation in the academic disciplines.

The common course numbering system has been one of the most significant steps in the ongoing development of articulation in higher education in Florida. For many years educators have hoped that a national common system for numbering and designating courses could be

developed, so that, among other things, students planning to transfer from one institution to another could plan their academic programs with a minimum of credit loss. The protection of credits earned has always been of intense and special concern to community college students transferring to universities. They need the assurance that their community college courses have an equivalency with those taken normally by students in the lower divisions of universities. The system defined, with the help of hundreds of faculty in public and private universities and community colleges organized into inter-institutional terms by academic discipline, the rough equivalencies of courses and assigning where appropriate common numbers and alpha prefixes. The evolving system is descriptive not prescriptive.

University-Community College Relations Officers

During the 1960s, some of the public universities, notably Florida Atlantic University and the University of South Florida, recognized how increasingly dependent they were upon the community colleges for a steady inflow of students. In response, they established community college relations officers to work closely with feeder community colleges and to assist transfer students in making the adjustments to the universities. Today all nine universities have community college liaison officers and in most instances a full-time director of community college relations. The community colleges, in turn, have appointed liaison officers to act as contact persons with the university officers. One of the most significant accomplishments of the liaison officers has been the development and publishing of counseling manuals, which indicate program by program what students should take in the community college program to meet course prerequisites at the upper-division level. The manuals have been produced on a

common format so that counselors can make comparison readily from institution to institution.

New Thrusts In Articulation

With the emergence of competency and performance-based academic programs in community colleges and universities, serious articulation problems may be anticipated unless steps are taken now to head them off. The Articulation Agreement presumes that students have been through a traditional time-based credit system. It does not accommodate students who have completed programs in which evaluation has been on the basis of achieved competencies, which are not reported in a traditional credit hour and grading system format.

One of the major thrusts in community college program and faculty development programs from the state level on down has been the promotion of time-variable, competency-based academic programs, especially in Associate of Science programs. The universities have developed competency-based teacher education programs, and one university, Florida State University, has designed in its Curriculum of Attainments project competency-based programs in Nursing, Biology, and Regional and Urban Planning. As a result of this progress in program development, the Articulation Committee has brought approximately 75 community college and university faculty together in appropriate fields to design joint pilot competency-based programs in general education. The competency-based articulation project in general education has sharpened concern about the nature and objectives of general education, informed a cadre of faculty about concepts and procedures for implementing competency-based programs, and built lasting productive professional relationships among the university and community college

faculty involved. It is thought by many that the Articulation Agreement of the future may contain alternative definitions of degrees stating degree requirements in performance and competency terms on a program by program basis. The pilot programs may help shape such a new Agreement and impact other areas of articulation.

A second thrust that has become increasingly evident in Florida has been the growth in the number of Associate of Science degree graduates successfully transferring to university level programs on terms very close to those established for the Associate of Arts graduates under the Articulation Agreement. The Associate of Science degree traditionally has been regarded as a terminal or early job entry degree program. Until recently, the universities have tended to either deny admission to Associate of Science degree graduates or require them to make up program deficiencies before admission. Associate of Science graduates not only take a number of technical terminal courses, often referred to as occupational courses, but also they take fewer general education courses than Associate of Arts students.

Significantly, the universities have begun to realize that the so-called occupational courses often entail learning experiences that are highly relevant to certain upper-level degree programs and they thus have designed a number of baccalaureate degree programs which are based upon those unique Associate of Science learning experiences. The programs, known as capstone or inverted programs, normally require students to complete university general education requirements as part of their upper-level programs, but there is an offsetting recognition of many of the students' occupational courses taken at

the community colleges. Although the Associate of Science students may have to take one or two extra quarters or terms to complete capstone programs, they generally do not have to matriculate as long as they would if enrolled as straight Associate of Science transfers with typical program deficiencies for traditional baccalaureate programs.

There is some evidence that the universities may have developed capstone or inverted programs to try to tap new student markets, as university enrollments have become more and more unpredictable. But despite the motivations, the universities are discovering that there is important educational value and validity to many of the learning experiences built into Associate of Science programs in the community colleges, especially those which stress practical field experiences or as some call them, hands on experiences. The thrust in the direction of accepting Associate of Science students on a near par basis with Associate of Arts graduates caused the Articulation Committee to appoint special task forces to explore the need for a statewide articulation agreement on the transfer of Associate of Science degree graduates and to what extent so-called occupational courses might be included in the definition of an Associate of Arts degree. The task force on the Associate of Science transfer degree recommended that transferability be determined on an institution by institution and program by program basis. The task force on the transfer of occupational courses as part of the Associate of Arts degree will make its recommendations to the Articulation Committee in late 1978.

A third thrust in articulation in Florida involves the statewide mandate to implement time-shortened and time-variable degree programs.

In 1972, apropos of the issuance of the Carnegie Report, Less Time More Options, the Commissioner of Education established a task force composed of representatives from all levels of education to explore the feasibility of developing three-year degrees. The task force report recommended to the Florida Legislature that public institutions from secondary schools through universities make acceleration possible for those students who can demonstrate that they are capable of it through the much greater use of such acceleration mechanisms as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement Program (APP), early admission programs, dual enrollment plans, and any other devices which would permit students to move through the educational continuum at paces commensurate with individual needs, abilities, and circumstances. The Florida Legislature in the Spring of 1973 mandated that the task force's recommendations be implemented by all public educational institutions, thus establishing on a statewide basis a responsibility to break the time lockstep.

No other state has taken such a bold initiative to make it possible for able students to move through the educational bureaucracy in nontraditional patterns. As a consequence, some startling things have happened with respect to student flow from secondary school to colleges and universities. Since 1973-74, approximately 200,000 credit hours are earned annually by Florida students via CLEP. Over fifty percent of the incoming freshmen in the State University System earn some credit via CLEP. Literally several thousand students take advantage of the wide array of acceleration mechanisms, many finding themselves splitting their school day between a high school and a local community college or university, others skipping entirely or in part their senior years, while still others take college level

courses in high school through the Advanced Placement Program. It is now very much harder to classify and define in Florida what is a high school or college student or what is high school or college level work. The lines among the levels of education are much less distinct now than ever before, bringing about a growing sense among educators at all levels that our educational system must be further reformed to make it individualized to permit students to move through formal school and college structures at their own pace unhampered by administrative and jurisdictional self-interests. The response to the time-shortened or time-variable education program is possibly unique in the country and to many Floridians, one which holds high promise of stimulating completely new relationships between learners and teachers.

A fourth development in articulation has been the increased shared use of facilities between community colleges and universities. While encouragement to share educational facilities whenever possible has come from the Legislature due to the recent economic squeeze and the spiraling costs of construction, the universities and community colleges have recognized themselves that such cooperation makes good sense educationally as well as economically. When the community college and university facilities are located either in close proximity to one another or are in the same location, students in both institutions have expanded opportunities to avail themselves of the educational resources found in each. Faculty and administrators, also, have increased opportunities to cooperate in delivering articulated instructional and administrative devices more efficiently and effectively when they share facilities and are forced into more intimate daily contact with one another. Academically talented

community college students can more easily dual enroll in a university advanced course when there are not long distances to travel between institutions and the same is true for university upper-level students who may need some remedial instruction best offered by the community college. While some community colleges are routinely extending the use of existing facilities to universities to conduct their off-campus and continuing education programs, there are plans among several universities and community colleges to actually construct new buildings on a joint basis on one another's campuses. Taxpayers and students can only benefit greatly from such cooperation and articulation.

A fifth thrust in articulation in Florida is seen in the area of international or intercultural education. Increasing numbers of Florida community college and university students are studying abroad from three weeks to two semesters and conversely an increasing number of foreign students are enrolling in Florida institutions, especially from Latin American and from the oil rich nations. The primary objective in developing international and intercultural programs is to help students to learn how to cope with cultural differences, whether or not they are encountered in our own society or through contacts with people from abroad. Articulation efforts are being directed toward improving our programs to meet that objective.

The state universities, community college, and private colleges are operating a wide variety of short and long-term study abroad programs throughout the world. Many of the programs are study/tours and all too often are not as well-planned or executed as they should be. The state University System regards all programs administered by individual universities as systemwide programs open to students

throughout the system on an equal basis. Cross registration procedures are simple; red tape is at a minimum. Coordination is maintained at the State University System Chancellor's office, which grants approval to programs before they are mounted. and approval authority also resides in the Department of Education, Division of Community Colleges. In June, 1975, an ad hoc committee of representatives from the community colleges, universities, and private institutions met for two days to outline areas of cooperation in international studies programming. It was agreed that some permanent form of cooperation needed to be established. As a result, in May, 1977, community colleges and universities founded the Florida Intercollegiate Consortium for International/Intercultural Education to bring about improved statewide cooperation and coordination in a wide range of international education activities.

Conclusion

The years of effort toward developing policies and mechanisms for insuring sound articulation and cooperation between the universities and community colleges of Florida have seemingly come to fruition. There are many problems still outstanding, but there has been a dramatic improvement in the climate of opinion and attitudes surrounding the articulation process. Much of the heated controversy felt in the 1960's has been dissipated by the obvious success of the Articulation Agreement and by the work of the Articulation Coordinating Committee. A new spirit of interinstitutional cooperation and respect between the community colleges and universities is growing rapidly and there is every reason to believe that the expansion of this spirit will continue and be enhanced in the years ahead.

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